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# President Lincoln's Cabinet

by

HONORABLE JOHN P. USHER

*Secretary of the Interior January 7, 1863—May 15, 1865*

WITH A

FOREWORD AND A SKETCH OF THE  
LIFE OF THE AUTHOR BY

NELSON H. LOOMIS

*General Solicitor Union Pacific Railroad Company*



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JOHN PALMER USHER



## *Foreword*

I was associated with the Honorable John P. Usher for several years just prior to his death and wrote from his dictation his remarks about President Lincoln's Cabinet, and his newspaper interview about the appointment of Ulysses S. Grant as Lieutenant General. His statement in regard to the issuance of Grant's commission as Lieutenant General was made in response to a request from the editor of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat for his recollections of that important event. The request stated in substance that the anniversary of General Grant's appointment as chief of all the Northern Armies would take place within a few days and that with the exception of General Grant, he was the only survivor of those present on that occasion. Mr. Usher's recollections were thereupon dictated to me, revised by him and afterwards published in the Globe-Democrat. They were never to my knowledge, placed in a permanent form or given publicity to others than the readers of that paper.

Mr. Usher's remarks in regard to Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet were first made in a speech delivered at a banquet given by Mr. D. M. Edgerton in honor of Judge D. D. Hoag, in Wyandotte, Kansas, on June 20, 1887. The address was impromptu and at the urgent request of those who heard him Mr. Usher, upon the following day, reduced his remarks to writing, and again I was the amanuensis used for the purpose. They were put in pamphlet form and a very limited number distributed among those who were present upon that occasion.

In view of the interesting character and the importance of many of the facts testified to by Mr. Usher in these statements, it has seemed worth while to put them in a permanent form and to give them a wider distribution than has heretofore been done, and while doing so to make known some of the salient facts as to the life and activities of Mr. Usher himself.

NELSON H. LOOMIS.

Omaha, Nebraska, January 1, 1925.



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## *John Palmer Usher*

**J**OHN PALMER USHER was born in Brookfield, Madison county, New York, January 9, 1816. He was a descendant of Hezekiah Usher, a bookseller, who was born in England about 1615, and died in Boston, Massachusetts, May 14, 1676. Hezekiah Usher was a citizen of Cambridge in 1639, and established himself in Boston in 1646. He became a selectman of the town and as agent for the Society for Propagating the Gospel purchased in England in 1657 the press and types used for printing the famous Eliot's Indian Bible.

John Palmer Usher's great great grandfather, John Usher, was Lieutenant Governor of New Hampshire from 1692 until 1697, and was reappointed in 1702. His father was Dr. Nathaniel Usher, and his mother (Lucy) was the daughter of John Palmer of Stonington, Connecticut.

After passing through the usual home and school training, John Palmer Usher entered upon the study of law in the office of Mr. Henry Bennett of New Berlin, New York, and was admitted to practice in the chancery courts of New York state by Chancellor Walworth on January 17, 1839. He was admitted to practice in the common law courts of that state by Chief Justice Samuel Nelson on the following day.

During the year 1840 Mr. Usher moved to Rockville, Parke county, Indiana, and shortly thereafter established himself in Terre Haute, Vigo county, Indiana, where he retained his home until his removal to Lawrence, Kansas, in 1865.

In 1844 he was married to Miss Margaret Patterson, daughter of General Arthur Patterson of Indiana, and had four sons—Arthur Patterson, John Palmer, Linton J. and Samuel Chambers.

Upon locating in Terre Haute, he formed a partnership, for the practice of law, with Mr. William D. Griswold with

whom he was associated for many years. Although the partnership was finally dissolved, and Mr. Usher's brother-in-law Chambers Y. Patterson, took Mr. Griswold's place in the firm Mr. Griswold and Mr. Usher remained warm personal friends until Mr. Usher's death. It was in Mr. Usher's office that Joseph G. Cannon, Ex-Speaker of the House of Representatives, studied law.

On page 64 of the *Bench and Bar of Indiana*, published in 1895, there is an interesting sketch of Messrs. Griswold and Usher, as they appeared upon the convening of the Supreme Court of Indiana on the third day of November, 1843. It reads as follows:

"William D. Griswold and John P. Usher were with them. The former, a small, quick man, with bald head and mild and kind expression of countenance, indicative of shrewdness and energy, an excellent lawyer, afterwards President of the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad Co. The latter, a man of large frame, with blonde hair, light blue eyes, and the fairest complexion, ruddy with health and hope, a man of much force, ambition, patience and learning, afterwards Secretary of the Interior under Lincoln, a man whose courage, vehemence and pertinacity at the bar, gave him great influence."

Mr. Usher was prosecuting attorney for the district composed of Greene, Vermilion, Parke, Putnam, Vigo, Clay and Sullivan counties, from 1842 to 1844. He was an active member of the legislature from Vigo county in 1850-1851. He was the Republican candidate for Congress from his district and made a vigorous campaign in support of his party's principles in 1856. He was appointed attorney general of the state of Indiana on November 10, 1861, and was filling that position when he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Interior on March 20, 1862.

Mr. Usher was a strong and successful practitioner, had a large clientele and tried many important cases, both in Indiana and Illinois. Like Mr. Lincoln he rode the circuit and had a stable of well selected riding and driving horses which were used to carry him between the various county seats of the circuits in which he practiced. While traveling the circuit he came in frequent contact with Abraham Lincoln and

was engaged in law suits with him. He took the stump in Mr. Lincoln's behalf and ardently supported him during the memorable campaign of 1860.

Mr. Caleb B. Smith, who had been a Member of Congress from Indiana for several terms and was a close personal friend of Mr. Usher's, was appointed Secretary of the Interior in President Lincoln's Cabinet. When the office of Assistant Secretary of the Interior was created in 1862, Mr. Smith induced Mr. Usher to accept the appointment as Assistant Secretary. Mr. Usher was not at the time inclined to take the office, as he had an ambition to be federal judge for the district of Indiana and hoped to receive the appointment when a vacancy occurred. Mr. Smith promised to use his influence to secure Mr. Usher's appointment to that position, but in the meantime urged him to assist in the work of the Interior Department. Mr. Usher finally consented and became Assistant Secretary of the Interior on March 20, 1862.

In the fall of that year, while Mr. Usher was in Minnesota investigating the Indian outbreak in that state, he learned of the death of Judge Elisha M. Huntington, United States District Judge for the district of Indiana, which occurred on October 26, 1862, and telegraphed to Mr. Caleb Smith reminding him of his promise. Mr. Smith responded that he had concluded to take the position himself, and would resign as Secretary of the Interior in favor of Mr. Usher.

Mr. Usher was not entirely satisfied with the arrangement, but there was nothing for him to do but make the best of it and he was installed as Secretary of the Interior on January 8, 1863. He continued in the office until May 15, 1865, when he was succeeded by Ex-Senator James Harlan of Iowa. He was at the bedside of President Lincoln at the time of his death and served as Secretary of the Interior for just a month during President Johnson's administration.

Mr. Caleb Smith evidently did not like the drudgery incident to a departmental position, and Mr. James G. Blaine in his *Twenty Years of Congress*, has this comment to make in regard to his resignation: "Mr. Caleb B. Smith had been prominent in the House of Representatives when Mr. Lincoln was a member, had been popular as a public speaker in the west, but had no aptitude for so serious a task as the administration of a great department, and did not long retain his position."

Mr. Usher filled the position as secretary in a most satisfactory manner, and Noah Brooks, a newspaper correspondent, resident in Washington during the war, and an old time friend of President Lincoln's, has this comment to make on page 35 of his *Washington in Lincoln's Time*

"Although Caleb B. Smith of Indiana, Secretary of the Interior, was one of the original members of Lincoln's Cabinet his immediate successor, John P. Usher, from the same State, is generally regarded as the representative man in the Interior Department during that administration; he held office from the time of Smith's resignation in the autumn of 1862 to near the end of Lincoln's life Secretary Usher was a fair, florid, well nourished and comfortable man, an able lawyer, a great worker, and generally accessible to the newspaper men, who for that reason always had a good word for the good natured and kindly disposed Secretary of the Interior."

As Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Usher had supervision of the public lands including mines, the census, the Indians, pensions, patents, public buildings, education, the custody and distribution of publications, the government hospital for the insane, the Columbia asylum for the deaf and dumb and blind, and the accounts of marshals, clerks, and officers of federal courts.

The construction of the Capitol building was completed, and the Statue of Freedom surmounting the dome was put in place during his administration. Work on the Washington aqueduct and the Potomac dam was under way while he was Secretary, and received his careful attention His reports for 1863 and 1864 indicate great interest on his part in the improvement of the streets and public grounds of Washington. Work on the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad was actively begun during his administration and his 1864 report shows that one hundred miles of the road west of Omaha had been permanently located and that forty miles were in process of construction. His report also shows that the first section of forty miles west of Kansas City had been completed and that the tracks had been laid in the second forty mile section.

At the beginning of the year 1865, being satisfied that the war was soon to end, Mr. Usher became anxious to get out of political life and locate in the west He wished to engage again in the practice of law and to identify himself

with the development of the country beyond the Missouri river. His trip in early life from New York to Terre Haute was made in an open buggy. His time as a member of the Indiana legislature was devoted to a considerable extent in the consideration of bills providing for the construction of canals and railroads. Some of his professional associates had become the heads of railroad corporations. He, himself, had been closely identified with the act of Congress of July 2, 1864, which extensively amended the act of July 1, 1862, providing for the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad, and he became desirous of connecting himself with the building of a transcontinental railroad. It was a great national undertaking, approved by the platforms of Republican and Democratic parties, and the enterprise had a strong attraction for him.

After his resignation as Secretary of the Interior, he accordingly accepted the appointment of General Solicitor of The Union Pacific Railway—Eastern Division, which was being constructed from Kansas City westward, and became one of the promoters in the building of that road. At the time of his appointment the road was in operation for about seventy-five miles west of Kansas City. While he was its General Solicitor the road was extended from there to Denver, and in order to comply with the terms of the acts of Congress it was connected with the main line of the Union Pacific at Cheyenne by the purchase and use of the line owned by the Denver Pacific Railway & Telegraph Company which extended from Denver to Cheyenne. The Union Pacific Railway Company—Eastern Division, afterwards named the Kansas Pacific Railway Company, built, during Mr. Usher's time, a number of branch lines in the state of Kansas.

During his incumbency of the position of General Solicitor the road was engaged in a great deal of important litigation involving its land grant and its relations with other railroad companies, and Mr. Usher's name will be found as counsel for this company in many cases reported in early Federal reports and reports of the Supreme Court of the United States. He was also engaged in a large number of cases in the state courts and was an important factor in helping to establish the laws applicable to railroads in the territory served by his company. The Kansas Pacific Railway Company was, on January 26, 1880, consolidated with the main line running

through Nebraska under the name of The Union Pacific Railway Company Mr. Usher was given the title of General Attorney in the new organization, and his jurisdiction included that portion of The Union Pacific Railway which he represented prior to the consolidation. Mr. Usher was also counsel in a number of important land grant cases in which the railroads of Texas and Colorado were involved His assistant for many years was Mr. Chas. Monroe, now one of the Superior Court judges of Los Angeles, California.

In 1887 he retired from active work as General Attorney with the title of General Counsel. He died on the 13th day of April, 1889.

Although he never filled a judicial position, Mr Usher was known as Judge Usher. He himself preferred the title of Mister, but his friends persisted in calling him Judge He was easily approached, was very democratic in his manners, was an indefatigable worker and a great story teller. In riding about on trains he invariably sat in the smoking car and engaged in conversation with anybody who seemed willing to talk with him. One of the best stories told on Judge Usher is given in an address delivered by Mr. A. L. Williams before the Kansas Historical Society:

"One of the brightest young men of the state, whose untimely death we all deplored a few years ago, was the proprietor of a newspaper and a hotel. He got into a controversy with the Judge (Usher) and in an editorial denounced him as haughty and fastidious. The Judge wrote him a good natured letter in which, among other things, he said, 'I do not think I am haughty, for I always ride in the smoking car, and I know I am not fastidious, for I once stopped three days at your hotel'."



## *President Lincoln's Cabinet*

Address by

Honorable John P. Usher

You ask me to say something about Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet. It is said by naturalists, I believe, that if you give them the toe of an animal, and possibly a small part of the toe-nail, they can tell you what sort of an animal it belonged to, so I will give a few anecdotes about the members of Mr. Lincoln's cabinet, so that you may know what manner of men they were.

The head of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet was Mr. Seward. The first vote I gave for anybody in my life was for him for governor. After that I came west, and saw no more of him and thought no more about him until the great time came for the nomination in 1860. I am glad that Mr. Lincoln had the sagacity to call him to the head of his Cabinet. When I came to know more of Mr. Seward, and saw the relations existing between him and Mr. Lincoln, I came to love him more than I had ever expected to. He was a man of the very kindest feelings. One might have supposed he would feel resentful at his defeat in Chicago and willing to see Mr. Lincoln making, at times, a spectacle of himself; for Mr. Lincoln was not well versed in the amenities of life, but I assure you that whenever foreign ambassadors were to meet Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Seward was careful that he should make no mistakes and should appear to the very best advantage. Was this not a great deal for a rival to do? He was as careful about Mr. Lincoln as if he were his own brother. When a foreign minister was to be presented to Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Seward always suggested to him in advance, what he should say, where he should stand, and how he should act. He was a man who would do all that, when the nation was in a manner dissolved. I never saw him show any resentment. When a number of clergymen wrote to him admonishing him of the weighty cares and duties that



rested upon him and begging him to be more temperate in his habits, he wrote a letter in answer to them and made it ready for the mail. At that point he concluded that he would not mail it until the next day, that he would think of the subject until then. By that time he determined not to send it and took the letter from his drawer and threw it in the fire. Speaking of the circumstances to my informant, an intimate friend of his, he said he believed he had character enough to withstand the calumnies then afloat against him and that he would apologize to no man or set of men for his habits.

After Mr. Lincoln was assassinated and after Mr. Seward returned to the Department of State, I called upon him, and he said that if he had been able to be out (he had been thrown from a carriage and was confined to his room) Mr. Lincoln would not have gone to the theatre that night. It seems that he knew of or anticipated some design or plot against the President.

I could say a great deal more about Mr. Seward but I have not time. You can form some idea of his character from what I have told you. I consider that he was one of the wisest statesmen we have ever had, and Mr. Lincoln, while he was a great and good man, would have had infinite trouble without him. The utmost confidence and kindly feeling existed between these two men. The people do not know and would hardly believe me if I told them their kindly feeling for each other, and the obligation of this nation to these men for their great labors for the preservation of the Union.

During all these days of anxiety and care there were occasionally ludicrous instances, which for a time lightened the gloom. There was a Swiss, Mr. John Hitz, living in Washington who kept a feed store and green grocery, upon the Avenue, south of the capital grounds. He was Consul General of the Republic of Switzerland. Occasionally a countryman of his would enter the army, and finding the service uncomfortable, would apply to Hitz to get him discharged. Hitz would make the appeal, but generally concluded by saying that if the ground stated by him did not compel the discharge of the soldier, he wanted him to stay and fight—that the Swiss were a liberty loving people and could never be better employed than fighting for it. It is history that the Government of Great Britain was in active sympathy with the rebellion.

This sympathy was manifested in a great many ways, not only by that Government but by a large majority of the people of England. The Government affected a desire to have the war ended. The end wanted, however, was an acknowledgment of the southern confederacy. Lord Lyons, then British Minister to Washington, was directed to propose to Mr. Seward an arbitration for the settlement of the controversy. He advised Mr. Seward of the desire of his Government. Mr. Seward replied that the proposition seemed to emanate from a humane and proper spirit and he would consider it. He told Lord Lyons that the United States had a Republican form of Government, that the insurgents who sought to overthrow that form of Government also claimed to have a Republican form of Government; that it would be unseemly and could not be expected, that the United States would consent to submit the question of its existence to a crowned-head, since all Monarchies were radically opposed to Republics; that Switzerland was a Republic and had an able representation at Washington, Mr. John Hitz, Consul General, who kept a feed store and green grocery upon the Avenue, and suggested that the whole matter be left to him. I suppose that Lord Lyons thought by that time that Mr. Seward was making sport of him, and so this matter of arbitrament ended.

Mr. Chase was a Dartmouth College man. He was an able man in every way, but he was selfish and ambitious. He wanted above all things to be President, and I think that if he saw or believed that Mr. Lincoln was about to make a mistake of any sort which would diminish him in popular favor it would have afforded him pleasure, that he would be far from doing or saying anything to prevent the act from being done, or to extricate Mr. Lincoln if it was done. Senator Pomeroy, of Kansas, put out a circular saying that Mr. Lincoln was not qualified to manage the affairs of this country and to successfully conduct the war then raging. It was signed by Kansas men with others. It was sent broadcast all over the country under the frank of the Treasury Department, this privilege being used by the bureau officers, one or more, of the Treasury Department. Many of the circulars were returned directly to President Lincoln. Mr. Chase hearing of it, immediately repaired to the White House and protested to the President that he knew nothing of it and had nothing to do with it. Mr. Lincoln replied to him, as he told

me, that he believed him, for he thought it impossible for him (Mr. Chase) to have done such a thing. This episode closed out the candidacy of Mr. Chase for President in 1864. But he did not abandon his ambitious hopes to become President. General Jackson had popularity in being called Old Hickory, General Taylor in being called Old Rough and Ready, and the admirers of Mr. Lincoln were prone to call him Honest Old Abe. Mr. Chase evidently thought that the soubriquet Old Greenbacks would advance him in popular favor. There were about Washington, here and there, men who had been Abolitionists, and their philosophy led them to pretty much ignore all other political principles and theories. They were all admirers of Mr. Chase and were wont to call him Old Greenbacks, apparently with the object of getting the populace to so call him. He was a remarkably handsome man, and his portrait, in its best form, was printed upon the One Dollar Greenback notes, where the greatest number would be most likely to see and become familiar with his face. During the canvass of 1864, he made a speech in Cincinnati to an immense multitude. He was popular in that city. Upon his return, in describing the scenes to the President he said he could occasionally hear voices all through the crowd applauding and calling him Old Greenbacks. When, however, he was advanced by Mr. Lincoln to the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and rigorous times came on, the army disbanded with greenbacks for their pay, the creditor class, as it always has and always will do, began looking about to see how they could get the most of their credits by diminishing the paying abilities of their debtors, Government as well as individual, and set up the unfounded claim that the principal of the bonds of the Government was payable in gold coin and that the debt of individuals was payable in like gold or silver coin, and that greenbacks were not a legal tender, and this because, as they alleged, the act of Congress making them legal tender was unconstitutional. Mr. Chase, then Chief Justice, affirmed all these monstrous claims. The debtor class was amazed and I imagine the holders of the dollar notes with the face of Mr. Chase upon them were a good deal puzzled to know what it meant, and wondered if he could have been of the same opinion when he was Secretary and directed his face to be put upon the notes, as he was when Chief Justice and decided they were not legal tender.

In Mr Benton's time, when the war was made upon the banking system of the country, he spoke of the beauty of gold and silver coin shining between the interstices of the silken purse, that nothing else was money. This received the popular applause. I won't say that Mr Chase supposed that the time was at hand when the people were ready to regard nothing as money except gold and silver coin. It cannot be denied, however, that his opinions as a jurist were opposite his views as a statesman.

After he was appointed Chief Justice, he was provided with a revenue cutter, in which he made a voyage to New Orleans. At New Orleans and Charleston, and may be at other ports, he addressed the blacks. He was then supposed to be their especial and unvarying friend. Yet in 1868, his friends for him strove in the Democratic convention in New York for his nomination to the presidency by that party — the party as such, of undying and unwavering hostility to the welfare of the colored people. If he had received the nomination, did he expect to change the Democratic party to his views, or was he willing to carry out theirs? In the sacred scriptures, the question is asked, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" So we are prone to ask, did he have reason to believe that the Democratic party could be induced to give fair play or grant even justice to the colored people? It taxes our credulity that he ventured to think so.

Notwithstanding, he was a great man as a statesman in the Senate or in the Cabinet. He expressed himself with clearness and force. On the bench he had no superior in expounding the Constitution and the law except, as I feel, and believe I ought, his decision on the Legal Tender act. Respecting that act and all the financial measures of the Government during the time that he was Secretary, they were adopted as a necessity. I do not think there was much forethought in respect to them by the Secretary or anyone else, until the action was had upon the emergency as it occurred. It was impossible to support the army and carry on the war by paying the expenses of the Government in coin. The issuing of paper was a necessity. When it was found that paper must be issued, the purpose of all who wished to preserve the Government by force of arms, was to make that paper as valuable as possible, and the chief element of its value was

believed to be in making it a legal tender for debts. When this paper was likely to become so abundant as to greatly diminish its value, it was found desirable to retire it, and so Congress provided for that by taxing all state bank issues and the issue of bonds, with interest payable in gold at six per cent., into which this legal tender money might be funded. All these measures were successful. As I remember, they all originated in Congress and met with the favor of the President, and he approved them.

I am not able to say much about the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Welles. I do not think he ever missed attending upon the President on Cabinet days. I have no recollection of ever hearing him express himself on public affairs, or indeed about anything. He was appointed by the President at the instance of Mr. Hamlin, the Vice-President. I heard it said in those times that there was a usage for the President to allow the Vice-President to name one member of the Cabinet, and by that usage Mr. Welles came to be Secretary of the Navy. I witnessed a sharp controversy between him and Mr. Bates, the Attorney General, upon some question of maritime law; what the question was I have forgotten, but I observed that Mr. Welles was tenacious of his opinion and refused to yield to Mr. Bates.

The official papers of Mr. Welles will compare favorably with those of any of the Secretaries of Mr. Lincoln or indeed of any of his predecessors or successors. I remember to have been struck with the clearness and conciseness of his statements in his official papers. His official letters and report of the capture of the Alabama by the Kearsage are models of conciseness and clearness of statement. He did not appear to have any intimacy with the President or any member of the Cabinet, and so far as I discovered, or knew, with any other person. He neither said nor did anything to antagonize the views of the President or anyone who might be supposed able to influence the President to his (Welles') prejudice.

When the President, with the knowledge and advice of Mr. Seward, sent the naval expedition to Pensacola without the knowledge of Mr. Welles or Mr. Cameron, Mr. Welles never complained of the indignity. He was true and faithful to the powers that were over him. The last time I met him was when President Johnson was making his famous journey,

called at the time "swinging around the circle," Mr Welles being one of the party After the usual salutations, Mr. Welles asked me how many stars I had in my flag, whether thirteen or thirty-six, I told him thirty-six and with that he seemed pleased I think Mr. Johnson was quite as much to his liking as Mr Lincoln was, yet you will remember that when Mr Charles Francis Adams, in his eulogy upon Mr. Seward, spoke slightly of Mr Lincoln, Mr Welles became indignant and made a vigorous protest against the insinuations prejudicial to the fame of Mr. Lincoln Mr Welles had an able support in Mr Fox, his assistant, but no evidence exists that Mr. Fox indited any of his official papers

Then there was Mr Caleb Smith, Secretary of the Interior, whom I succeeded early in January, 1863—remaining in office until May, 1865. I knew him well He was a true orator He was a man who, from the rostrum, would talk to you until you would feel the blood tingling through your veins to your finger ends and all the way up your spine When you meet a man who can do that, argument is at an end, you are carried away by the irresistible power of eloquence. Caleb Smith was not an Abolitionist. He said to me one day when I was Assistant Secretary, "What do you think of the President issuing a proclamation abolishing slavery?" I said, "I do not think well of it at this time" He said, "If he does I will resign and go home and attack the administration" I suppose the propriety of the first emancipation proclamation had been discussed, Mr Smith having just returned from the Cabinet meeting You see what trouble Mr. Lincoln had Mr. Smith was a man so conservative in his ideas that he felt that he could not at that time approve of a proposition to emancipate the slaves in aid of the suppression of the rebellion, though when the first proclamation was issued Mr. Smith had changed his views and favored it

Mr. Smith was born in Boston and educated in Ohio but his manhood was spent in Indiana. He was ever opposed to the Democratic party in all its forms and organizations. He was a Republican, but not of the order of Mr. Julian. They were the antipodes of each other. Yet he for nearly a year indulged the hope that the rebellion could be suppressed without emancipating the slaves; not that he favored slavery but because he shrank from interfering with the right of property in slaves. In that respect he came to be in accord with the Unionists in the slave states.

Mr Smith was an able lawyer and administered the duties of his office with fidelity and ability.

Now I want to speak a few words about Simon Cameron. I am glad to have this opportunity to speak of him, because so much, at one time and another, has been said to his prejudice. I think that he was, and is, about as good a specimen of humanity, of fairness and honesty and justice as we ever had, however good. Mr. Lincoln made him Secretary of War. I will tell you an anecdote or circumstance which occurred to illustrate what I am going to say about him. I think it was in the early part of 1865, along in the winter—maybe in March—John Covode of Pennsylvania, whom we all delighted to call Honest John, who had not the advantages of a college education, or indeed, of scarcely any education in his youthful days, came to the Department one day. We were great friends. I do not know why, but he had taken a liking to me and I to him. He said, "Come down to the Avenue House tonight to meet some of my friends." I went down. I found in the dining-room the table spread along its whole length with a cold collation and about forty seats at the table, all filled by Pennsylvanians, and I was seated at the table by the side of Mr. Cameron who had lately returned from St. Petersburg where he had been sent as Minister. There was plenty of wine and we helped ourselves to both food and wine. By and by Mr. Covode, sitting at the end of the table, reached behind him and took up a sword about three and a half feet long standing there and unsheathed it. The sword was so long that it required him to stretch his arms to the utmost. "Now," said he, "this sword was made and sent to me by my chum. He was an apprentice with me in Massachusetts, to the blacksmith trade. When we became older, my chum remained in Massachusetts and followed the trade he had learned. You know what has become of me and what I have done. My old chum has amassed wealth and is a true Union man. He has forged out this sword and sent it to me as a token of his patriotism and respect for what I have tried to do." After this and some other remarks, speeches were called for. One after another spoke, but no notice was taken of Mr. Cameron or allusion made to him. At length Covode called on Cameron to speak, saying, "Now we want to hear from Simon Cameron, our old war horse." He quickly arose at the call and began by speaking of the Republican party and its achievements. He said it had suppressed a great rebellion;

it had emancipated millions of slaves, but its great work was not yet done, that much remained to do, the freedom of the slaves emancipated was yet to be secured and ample provision made for their protection and for securing to them equal rights with all the citizens of the nation "But what are we to think of a party," he said, "that, within sixty days after going into power, appoints a committee to investigate the frauds of its own members? They even had the audacity to accuse me of corruption in office—of making corrupt contracts. I, who during all the time that I was Secretary of War, never made any contract whatever " During the time he was speaking he raised himself to his utmost height, his shoulders flew back until his coat swung clear of his body. His speech was vehement and his auditors, who it appeared to me, were jealous of his fame and power, sat silent while he spoke I was somewhat surprised at his declaration that he never made any contracts while he was Secretary of War, and after he sat down I fell into a conversation with him about it He said all contracts were made in the Quartermaster and Commissary Departments, that this thing of accusing him of making corrupt contracts was the most preposterous and absurd thing of all. "For," he said, "if I have any ability whatever, it is an ability to make money I do not have to steal it. I can go into the street any day, and as the world goes, make all the money I want. It was so absurd to accuse me of that. When the war broke out I knew that this railroad from Baltimore to Harrisburg, the Northern Central of Pennsylvania, was bound to be good property, the soldiers and people devoted to the preservation of the Union traveling to Washington would necessarily be transported over it. The stock was then worth but a few cents on the dollar. I knew that from the very necessity of the case it would advance in value to par or nearly so. I bought large blocks of this stock, and told Mr Lincoln if he would give me ten thousand dollars I would make him all the money he wanted." I asked him if Mr. Lincoln was inclined to do it. He said no; that there was his mistake; that the investment would have been perfectly legitimate and that he might as well have made a large sum of money as not

Now that is Mr Cameron, and you will find that there is no evidence that Simon Cameron was a corrupt man He was ever faithful to the cause.



I was coming down from Denver one day and met Major Ed. Smith. We were coming along together. Upon the way he related the following incident concerning Mr. Cameron: He said he was at the court house, at Reading, the day after Sumpter was fired on, the drums were beating in the street and he went home and told his father he was going to the war. Directly he went to Washington with his comrades, and went into camp near the arsenal. He was not very well pleased with the position as private and wanted to see if he could not do a little better. He went to see Mr. Cameron, whom he knew very well, but could not manage to see him. The whole War Department was filled and surrounded by people waiting to see Mr. Cameron, and it was impossible for Smith to get in. So he wrote Mr. Cameron a note and told him he was camped down near the arsenal, that he wanted to see him, but could not for the crowd surrounding the Department. Mr. Cameron had no more than got the note than he sent an orderly to Smith, directing him to come to the Department. Smith went and Mr. Cameron asked him how long he had been in Washington. He answered he had been there some days and had tried to see him, but could not for the crowd. "What do you want?" said Mr. Cameron. "I want you to make me a lieutenant or captain in the regular army," Smith replied. Cameron said "Oh, that won't do, you shall be a major; no relation of George Smith who voted for me for the Senate twenty-five or thirty years ago, shall be around here with such a commission as that." That was his feeling towards his friends. When George Smith died, Mr. Cameron went over to Reading and stayed until he was buried. People talked about him and accused him of corruption in office, because he had such friends outside of his party. They said he must have bought them. Don't you believe a word of it. He did no such thing. He was faithful and true. In close elections, he received votes from the opposing party, because they were his friends and grateful for favors long before bestowed.

In this connection there is another incident in which Mr. Cameron figures, which may be interesting: At a meeting of the Cabinet, the chief topic of discussion was the organization of the armies and putting them in the field, and after talking a while they came to the conclusion that they didn't know anything about the subject—knew but little about it,

and would want to inquire how this or that would do, and what ought to be done, and the different members would say, "Well, we don't know," (this is the way Lincoln told it to me) "we will go and see General Scott and see what he says about it." So one bleak, rainy day they went over to his quarters. His room was bare of furniture. Gen. Scott was so infirm that he could not come to the White House, or remain in the War Department and he had taken a room for his quarters across the street, near the War Department. When they went in he had a stick or two upon the fire burning brightly, and they all took seats around the fire. Gen. Scott was lying on a low and broad lounge in one corner of the room, he had a strap attached to a ring in the ceiling, and another ring at the end, reaching down over him a little below his breast, which he was accustomed to take hold of and pull himself up with. He was very large and plethoric. After they sat down he got hold of that ring and with some trouble pulled himself to an upright position and swung his feet off the lounge upon the floor. Before they said anything they sat there looking at him, and he commenced his speech to the President. He said, "I am an old man. I have served my country faithfully, I think, during a long life. I have been in two great wars and fought them through, and now another great war is impending and I am nominally at the head of the army, but I don't know how many men are in the field, where they are, how they are armed, how they are equipped or what they are capable of doing or what reasonably ought to be expected of them. Nobody comes to tell me and I am in ignorance about it, and can form no opinion respecting it. I think under all the circumstances I had better be relieved from further service to my country." It was a very pathetic speech. They all sat silent and made no reply. At length Seward said in rather a cheerful tone, hitching himself in his chair in his usual way, "I think I see a way out of this." Cameron—it was not long after the Pensacola affair—flew into a passion at once and said, addressing Seward, "I suppose you do! You are always meddling with that which don't concern you!" This little ebullition set them all laughing and so they directly got up and bade the General good-by and went off. The point of it was that it amused Lincoln so to see Cameron turning on Seward and saying that he was always meddling with that which didn't concern him. Said Lincoln to me, "I suppose he referred to the Pensacola affair." So you see Mr. Cameron was

smarting under the action of the President and Mr. Seward in sending out the Pensacola expedition without his knowledge.

Now I have to speak of Mr. Stanton, and one of the troubles with him was that he was a dyspeptic and because of that his temper was irascible and unequable. I was with him one day in the Cabinet and his speech to me was rude and offensive. I determined I would never speak to him again. Relating the circumstance to a friend he said, "You do not know what a man will do who is a dyspeptic." I said he was no dyspeptic. He replied that he was and the worst afflicted man he ever saw. I said I hardly thought so. At the next Cabinet meeting he came in as cheery as could be. He said, "Does any member of the Cabinet want to name some one for appointment in the Quartermaster or Commissary service?"—that there were half a dozen or more to be appointed. I promptly said, "Yes, I do." A few years before I had defended a youth against an accusation involving life and liberty. He had gone to Iowa, grown to manhood, and joined a regiment of cavalry in that state. He was a warrant officer in the regiment and was charged with duties which belonged to the Quartermaster's Department. The superior officer concluded that it would be to the advantage of the service if he could be appointed to a position in the Quartermaster's Department. So he came to Washington and naturally came to me to secure the appointment for him. Because of my interview with Stanton a few days before, I informed him that it was impossible for me to help him, that it would avail nothing for me to make the application. He informed me that he would leave by the afternoon train for his regiment. But how soon the whole thing changed! I was able to convey to him his good fortune at the depot as he was about to take the train. So I concluded that it was my duty to forgive Mr. Stanton. His career was marked by similar incidents. Mr. Stanton had able and devoted friends and admirers. Mr. Moorehead, an iron master of Pittsburg, then a member of Congress, was an especial friend and admirer of his. One day Mr. Moorehead was in Stanton's office and a commissioned officer of inferior rank came in wearing his uniform. Stanton immediately commenced upon him in the rudest possible manner and without giving him any opportunity to explain, wanted to know why he was there, and why he was not in the field with his regiment, and so he

went on. The officer turned upon his heel and left at once. Mr. Moorehead immediately remarked. "Why did you treat that man so?" Mr. Stanton replied, "I did not mistreat him." He was answered, "Yes you did, and very deeply insulted him. He has gone away justly angry and will not soon forget this." Mr. Stanton called his door-keeper and directed him to run after the man and bring him back. He was soon again in his presence and Stanton said, "Mr. Moorehead here says I insulted you." The officer replied, "Yes you did, in a most offensive manner. I have been in the field with my regiment without any leave of absence for two years or more, I got leave to come here, my object principally being to see you and pay you my personal respects, and this is the way I have been received and treated." Stanton immediately made the most ample apology and protested that he intended no offense.

One day in a conversation with an ex-member of Congress from Philadelphia, whose habits had been to his great disadvantage, in discussing Mr. Stanton and his character, and speaking of his rude and offensive manners, he told me that on one occasion several years before, he was in Pittsburg and in want of money. Stanton was practicing law there and he applied to him for a loan and was rudely repulsed. Upon going to his room some hours after he found twenty dollars between the leaves of a book with a note from Stanton that he had left the money for him and if he needed more to apply to him. After Stanton removed to Washington this gentleman had the management of an important suit with a fee conditional. He employed Mr. Stanton to assist him. The suit was determined in his favor and he received the stipulated compensation, amounting to several thousand dollars. He took the money to Mr. Stanton, told him what he had, and proceeded to divide the money into equal parts, and handed the one-half to Mr. Stanton for his compensation. Stanton took it and counted out a part and handed the major portion to this gentleman. He at once said, "It is not mine, it is fairly yours, and I want you to keep it." Stanton replied, "Take it or I will put it in the stove, it is not mine, I have got all I am entitled to." You will see from this his remarkable peculiarities. He had an only son. He had taken care to give him a superior education at Kenyon College. This son was possessed of a most lovable character. He grew to manhood and survived his father a few years. He was a lawyer of note and

good promise. One would suppose that Stanton would have at least, in the making of his will, bestowed upon him his library, but when his will came to be published it was found that he had not given him a cent or a scrap of any kind, book or anything else. Yet Mr. Stanton was possessed of a considerable fortune, his estate amounting to nearly one hundred thousand dollars. How will you account for all this? His son gathered up all his father's loose property, books and everything else and submitted it to sale without a word of complaint.

From the circumstances which I have related you can form some judgment of the character of this extraordinary man. He was a man of immense mental power. Upon occasions I have heard him express himself in speaking of the men who plunged this country into war in almost paralyzing terms. He was devoted to the cause he was striving to serve and gave all his energies to it. Night after night he remained in his office until a late hour and sometimes until daylight, not unfrequently would his carriage be found standing at the door waiting for him when daylight came. No enemy of his ever had the audacity to charge him with corruption in office. Mr. Seward appreciated and respected him. Sometimes he used to call him the Carnot of the war, because of his devotion, his ability and his faithfulness. He enjoyed the confidence and unfaltering friendship of the President. His foibles and his irascibilities were overlooked and unconsidered by the President. Mr. Lincoln appreciated his loyalty, his devotion and his ability. Upon one or more occasions he was known to have taken the written requests of the President and to have torn them into fragments and stamped them beneath his feet. This conduct being reported to the President he simply said, "Well I have not much influence with this Administration but expect to have more with the next." The truth was that Mr. Lincoln had told Mr. Stanton that if he made requests of him which would injure the public service if granted, he was at liberty to disregard them. Yet it seems that Stanton was hardly justified in tearing these requests in pieces in the presence of strangers.

Mr. Stanton was a profound lawyer and a great orator. After he was Secretary he delivered one or more addresses advocating the election of General Grant for the presidency, which were unsurpassed. He had enemies—always had them,

but do or say what they could they were unable to supplant him in the public estimation. Had he lived he would have acquired great fame in the judicial position to which General Grant had appointed him. It may justly be said that he gave his life a sacrifice to the welfare and the saving of the Nation, and his memory should ever be held dear.

Edward Bates, from Missouri was the Attorney General, first appointed by Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Bates was named for the office of President in the convention which finally selected Mr. Lincoln for the candidate of the Republican party. So was Mr. Seward, Mr. Cameron and Mr. Chase. Thus you see that Mr. Lincoln in the selection of his cabinet officers, named all his rival candidates in the convention. Mr. Bates had a very considerable following. He was a man of unostentatious manners, easily approached by all who wished to see him and highly respected by all. He was born in Virginia, but emigrated to St. Louis while he was yet a young man. He became, and was an eminent lawyer and had great success in his profession without acquiring much fortune. While he was Attorney General he rendered important service to the Government. Early in the Administration he was called upon for an opinion touching the alleged non-citizenship of people of African descent. By the decision of the Supreme Court in Dred Scott's case it was claimed that negroes were not citizens, and it was accordingly said by many that that decision held that the colored people had no rights which white men were bound to respect. Mr. Bates in a very able opinion declared that persons of African blood, of whatever degree, born in the United States were citizens of the United States, and his opinion upon that subject was followed and became the law of the Administration. The Dred Scott decision was no more heard in Israel. Mr. Bates was shrewd. He avoided antagonizing others whenever he could, but when he was driven to it he was firm and unmovable. I remember one occasion when I was greatly benefited by his shrewdness. By the Oregon organic act, it is provided that certain missionary stations with one section of land should be, and were granted to the missionary societies occupying said stations. The Methodists, conceiving themselves entitled to the station which was near The Dalles upon the Columbia river, proceeded to mark out irregular lines around an area of land amounting to six hundred and forty acres, within which lines there was

a population of some four hundred people whose possession was adverse to the claim, and insisted that there should be a patent issued for this irregular tract of land. I was beseeched by the leading members of that denomination to direct the issue of a patent, but I was not satisfied that it could be legally done. I was reminded that that denomination of people had with great unanimity supported the President and the war, which I well knew. The pressure brought to bear upon me was persistent and I was very much perplexed as to what I should do. If I issued the patent the effect might be very injurious to the people living upon the land—if I refused to issue it, I would greatly offend a large and influential following of the Administration. One day I received a note from Henry S. Lane, then a Senator from Indiana, and a member of the Methodist church, requesting me to come to the Capitol. I went up and found an assembly in the marble room of the Senate chamber, consisting of several of the Methodist bishops and a great many members of Congress of both houses. I at once suspected why my presence was desired, but I did not have to wait long for I was soon advised of what was wanted—that I should direct the Commissioner of the Land Office to prepare a patent for this land near The Dalles. I said it was a very intricate question and one which I had not decided and was not yet prepared to decide—but that I was then engaged in an examination of the question, and would devote my attention to it without delay. Mr. Lane, among his many other good qualities, was celebrated for his sense of justice and propriety. He at once spoke out and said, “You are quite right, it cannot be expected that you will direct a patent to be issued unless you are satisfied that the act of Congress will justify you in doing so.” I bowed my acknowledgments straightway and left the room. In my perplexity I thought of Mr. Bates, and soon thereafter meeting him I explained to him my trouble and told him I contemplated asking him his official opinion upon the subject. He said he had in his time settled a great many controversies with religious organizations, that he made it a point never to antagonize them, and that with gentleness and kind words there was no difficulty in making peace among them. So I sent the case to him and in a few days he returned a brief answer advising that I should refrain from considering the subject any further since the patent would be of no value to the church because if the right existed by virtue of the act of

Congress it would not be strengthened a particle by the patent, if I decided to advise the issuing of a patent. On the other hand if I reached the conclusion that the lands were not granted to the church, and upon that ground refused to advise the issuing of the patent, it might embarrass the church in the litigation advised by him. His opinion was submitted to the Bishops and they appeared to be satisfied with it. So a settlement was reached of a controversy which might have become extremely troublesome, for if a patent had been issued to the church the three or four hundred settlers at The Dalles would have clamored against it, and if the decision had been against the issuing of the patent, ugly complaint would have come up from the church. Out of this difficulty the Department was extricated by the act of Mr. Bates.

Mr Bates often said to me that all there was left of a man after arriving at the age of seventy were the patches and shreds that he had saved up as he went along. When he arrived at the age of seventy he resigned and returned to St. Louis, where he resided for several years thereafter in quiet repose, loved by many friends and venerated by all. A beautiful statue has been erected in one of the parks in St. Louis to his memory.

Mr Montgomery Blair was the first Postmaster General under Mr Lincoln. He was one of the organizers of the Republican party. He was faithful and devoted to the declared principles of that party. It cannot be truly said that he ever swerved from them. He abhorred secession and rebellion. He cordially approved of the emancipation proclamations, but he did not approve of the reconstruction plan finally adopted.

During his incumbency of the office of Postmaster General many reforms and changes for the benefit of the service were made, to its great advantage. The patronage of his office was then immense, but very much greater now. In his appointment to office and recommendations of appointment, he applied the Jeffersonian test, "Is he capable and is he honest?" His great care was not to appoint any one to office who was indifferent to the success of the Union arms. That was made the test. Indeed that was the test in all the Departments. That a man had been, or was a Democrat was no objection to his appointment to office. Applying this



test, it is true, there were not very many Democrats appointed, though we did not regard any man a Democrat enough to hurt. if he was honestly in favor of maintaining the Government. This rule was applied in the appointment to office in the army and in promotions. Whoever will carefully read and consider the history of those times will be satisfied of the truth of this statement. It is to Mr Blair's credit that his lofty character exempted him from any accusation of misuse of his power or of his office

Before the end of Mr Lincoln's first term Mr. Blair resigned and Governor William Dennison, of Ohio, was appointed his successor. Mr. Dennison was Ohio's war governor. He supposed that it was his duty to attend to the expressed wishes of persons who arrogated to themselves the claim of being genuine and Simon pure Republicans. There were great numbers of that particular class of people sojourning in and about Washington, claiming the right in a greater or less degree to dictate as to who should have office. An aged gentleman by the name of Allison was postmaster at Georgetown, at the time. He was an old citizen of the District, Mayor of Georgetown, and respected by all but these new comers. They conceived the idea of having Mr Allison removed, and accordingly lodged with Mr Dennison a ponderous petition, praying for his removal. The Governor brought it with him to the Cabinet meeting and apparently was about to submit it for consideration. He explained what it was and expressed his ignorance of the usual course of presenting such matters. Thereupon, Mr Seward said, "Well I know Mr. Allison very well. When I came here as a Senator from New York, I wanted a seat in the Episcopal church. The people here considered me an Abolitionist and determined among themselves that I should not have a seat in the church. This coming to the knowledge of Mr Allison, he came to me and said he owned a pew in the church and that it was at my service, that I should sit there no matter who objected, and I did." By this time a broad grin came over the faces of the President and all of us and Mr. Lincoln said, "Oh, I know Mr. Allison," and Governor Dennison folded up the papers and that is the last we heard of it. So things went with him as Postmaster General the same as they had when Mr. Blair occupied that position. Whoever sympathized with the rebels were considered as "offensive partisans" and were relieved of office.

Governor Dennison was a man of remarkably delightful manners, of good address, faithful and devoted in maintaining the cause of the Union and was respected by everybody who knew him. Mr. Dennison was in the Cabinet when Mr. Lincoln was assassinated and remained several months after Mr. Johnson was inaugurated.

James Speed, of Louisville, Kentucky, succeeded Mr. Bates as Attorney General. I suppose his appointment arose from the fact that Mr. Lincoln was desirous of making some special recognition of the Speeds, of Kentucky, growing out of the fact that Joshua Speed, the father of James, had in years gone by, been the intimate friend and associate of Mr. Lincoln, at Springfield. Joshua Speed had returned to Kentucky and was enjoying a life of ease and comfort. He was a devoted Union man and did not want office, or special recognition. He was only anxious for the success of his friend, the President. The name of James Speed was sent to the Senate for confirmation at or about the time that Mr. Chase was nominated for Chief Justice. The Senate promptly confirmed the nomination of Mr. Chase but omitted to confirm or pass upon the nomination of Mr. Speed. Mr. Lincoln observing this, was quite annoyed. Although Mr. Chase was confirmed his commission was not signed. Some of his friends inquiring of the President why the commission was not delivered, he quaintly remarked, "The Senate has not acted upon my nomination of Mr. Speed; when that is done I will consider whether I will deliver the commission to Mr. Chase or not." It was not long after this remark before the Senate confirmed the nomination of Mr. Speed. Mr. Speed was not widely known as a lawyer, but he had eminence in his own state, and my understanding was that he stood at the head of the bar in Louisville. His learning and ability, well qualified him for the office. He lately passed away without a stain or blemish upon his name or fame.

After Mr. Chase resigned his office as Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Wm. Pitt Fessenden, of Maine, was appointed his successor. He had been a Senator for many years and Chairman of the Finance Committee. He was justly regarded as a leader in the Senate. His abilities and integrity were never questioned nor criticised. He was Secretary but a few months when he retired from the Treasury.

Hugh McCullough, of Indiana, succeeded him. He was at the time of his appointment Comptroller of the Currency. He was a native of Maine. I believe, educated to the law and at one time Probate Judge of Allen county, Indiana. Until he came to Washington to discharge the duties of Comptroller of the Currency he had been a bank officer for twenty-five or thirty years. He was appointed to the office one or two months before Mr. Lincoln was assassinated and remained Secretary during the Administration of Mr. Johnson. His career as an officer of the bank seemed to have impressed upon him the sense of obligation to the creditor class, to take care and see that the paper discounted by the bank was made perfectly secure. In his time the bank adopted a plan by which the names of the debtor and his sureties should be signed upon the face of the note instead of accepting the names of the sureties in the form of indorsements upon the back of the note and thus avoid the necessity of protest. That was about all the improvements in the way of banking that I am aware of during his time as cashier and president of banks. It was a good thing for the banks and likely to save much inconvenience and trouble. When he came to be Secretary, it appeared to many that he was not conscious that his position was changed, that he was no longer acting for the creditor class, but for the people, that his effort seemed to be to make the creditors of the Government more secure and their credits more valuable, though it might be opposed to the interests of the tax payers who had the debt to pay. Many thought that he was upon the wrong side of the counter—that he ought to have taken his place with the tax payers instead of the bond and note holders; that it was unwise for him in behalf of the Government to insist upon giving the note and bond of the Government with interest, when the creditor was willing to hold the note or greenback of the Government without interest; that it was not good financiering to advocate the giving of a Government bond with interest for paper which bore no interest, or less interest than the bond. John Cavode of whom I have already spoken, then a Member of Congress, believing with others that the funding process was injurious to the tax payers offered and secured the passage of a resolution through the House disapproving of the further funding of greenbacks and non-interest paper; and afterwards, Cavode being at the Treasury Department, the Secretary called Mr. Cavode's attention to the resolution and told him that he

was injuring the credit of the Government. Cavode replied by asking him if the Government was in the market seeking to borrow money, or whether it was trying to pay its debts. Upon being answered that the Government was not seeking to borrow any money, Cavode replied, "Then I am not so very solicitous about the credit of the Government, it can pay its debts more easily if the holders of its paper do not consider it equal to gold." Was that not a more common sense view to take of the subject? About his policy and whether it brought upon the country the hard times we experienced, men differed in opinion. There were however, but few, embarrassed with debt, that approved of his policy, and today there is scarcely one to be found in favor of taking up by payment in coin or otherwise, the legal tender notes of the Government now outstanding.

Mr McCullough was a man of great integrity, who undoubtedly believed that his policy was correct. Whether it was for the best or otherwise cannot be demonstrated. The Nation has lived through it, many years have gone by since the financial affairs of the Government have been placed upon solid ground and the value of its paper established, equal to its coin.

### *Appointment of Ulysses S. Grant*

as Lieutenant General

When the President delivered the commission of Lieutenant General to General Grant, the members of the Cabinet were Mr. Seward, Secretary of State; Mr. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; Mr. Stanton (successor to Mr. Cameron), Secretary of War; Mr. Welles, Secretary of the Navy; Mr. Blair, Postmaster General; Mr. Bates, Attorney General, and myself, Secretary of the Interior. Of these and all present upon that occasion, with the exception of General Grant, I am the sole survivor.

Mr. Lincoln thought it fit and proper to convene the Cabinet to witness the ceremony. Upon my entering the room of the President all of the Cabinet were present with the exception of Mr. Stanton. Soon after I inquired of the President why we were summoned, he made no direct answer. Whether the other members present knew why they were

called I do not know. The President seemed to be in good spirits, which made me wonder the more why we were there; but I supposed in due time I would find out, and listened to the conversations going on. The President had not much order in the arranging and keeping of his papers, his table was generally filled up with papers as long as they would lie on it. He did not seem to have any difficulty in finding any paper that he wanted amongst the huge mass thrown promiscuously there. Presently Mr. Stanton, General Halleck and General Grant entered the room. Without accosting the President or any one present, they moved rapidly to the far side of this table and stopped facing the table, with General Grant between General Halleck and Mr. Stanton. The President was on the opposite side. As they stopped and were in the position described, the President arose and took from the table a scroll tin case, opened it and took out the parchment commission. He then took from the pile of papers upon the table what soon proved to be his address to General Grant, the precise words of which I cannot remember, neither have I a copy. As well as I can remember, it ran nearly in these words:

“General Grant—The Congress of the United States recently passed a law creating the office of Lieutenant General. It seemed to be the will of Congress, as well as of the people, in which I heartily concur, that the office should be conferred upon you. You were nominated to the Senate for the office and the nomination was confirmed. I now present you your commission.” As he said that he handed to General Grant the commission, and then concluded. “The loyal people of the Nation look to you, under the providence of God, to lead their armies to victory.”

After the lapse of twenty-one years, it cannot be expected that any one could remember the precise words of the President, though I believe I have given them quite accurately. Then General Grant took from his vest pocket a paper containing the response to the President. The substance of it I cannot recollect, I do not now remember a single sentence or phrase in it. But I do remember that the paper upon which it was written was probably less than a quarter of a sheet; that he held the paper in his right hand and commenced reading it, and read probably half of it, when his voice gave out. Evidently he had not contemplated the effort of reading,

and had commenced without inflating his lungs. When General Grant commenced reading he was standing most awkwardly, what in common parlance would be called "hip shot." When his voice failed he straightened himself up in his fullest and best form, threw his shoulders back, took the paper in both hands, one at each end, and drew the paper up within proper reading distance and commenced again at the beginning and read it through in a full strong voice. As he straightened himself up and took the paper in his hands it seemed to me that he was thinking to himself "I can read this paper without faltering, and I am going to do it." And he did. After it was read, the members of the Cabinet were introduced to General Grant. I had never before seen him, neither do I think any other member of the Cabinet had seen him. Mr. Lincoln directly said to General Grant, "I have never met you before." Grant replied, "Yes, you have, I heard you in your debate with Douglas at Freeport, and was there introduced to you. Of course, I could not forget you, neither could I expect you to remember me, because multitudes were introduced to you on that occasion." Mr. Lincoln replied, "That is so, and I do not think I could be expected to remember all". It seemed then, as it seems today, to be a remarkable fact that neither the President nor any member of his Cabinet, up to that time, had any personal acquaintance with General Grant. None of us had, to our knowledge, ever seen him. We had heard of him. From the battle of Pittsburg Landing to the battle of Iuka and Corinth the reports were as often disparaging as they were favorable. General Grant never sent anyone to propitiate or make favor with the President. After the battle of Corinth, Judge Dickey, now of the Supreme Court of Illinois, and a personal friend of Mr. Lincoln, came to Washington from Grant's camp and gave such a favorable account of him as, I believe, gained from Mr. Lincoln his fullest confidence in Grant's abilities, and this confidence was never broken, nor in the least abated. I heard Mr. Lincoln say, on one occasion, "General Grant is the most extraordinary man in command that I know of." He said: "I heard nothing direct from him, and wrote to him to know why, and whether I could do anything to promote his success, and Grant replied that he had tried to do the best he could with what he had; that he believed if he had more men and arms he could use them to good advantage and do more than he had done, but he supposed I had done and was doing all I

could, that if I could do more he felt that I would do it." Lincoln said that Grant's conduct was so different from other generals in command that he could scarcely comprehend it.

It was not until after the capture of Vicksburg that Grant sent anyone to the President direct from his army. Then he sent General Rawlins. I met him at the White House and was introduced to him by the President. Evidently Rawlins knew more of the field than of the court. He was browned and sun-burned, he sat close in the corner of the fireplace and appeared embarrassed to know what to do with his hands. He had provided himself with a new military suit of blue which hung loose upon his emaciated limbs. He was free to answer questions when asked, but showed no disposition to enlarge his speech beyond the appropriate answer. He was modest, and it was plain that he was neither carpet knight nor courtier. He did not come to ask for anything, but the time of his coming and his manner naturally led to the impression that Grant concluded that, after nearly three years of successful war, he might, without being charged with vanity, send his chief of staff to the President and Secretary of War to relate to them, if they wanted to know, incidents of his conflicts which might not be embraced in his reports. And well he might. In the language of John A. Logan, his army had with their swords hewn their way to the sea. But I digress. I was prompted to write in order to relate, as far as I could remember, what took place when Mr. Lincoln delivered General Grant his commission. His address to Grant and Grant's reply doubtless may be found published in the press of that time. I hope they may be found and published. Mr. Lincoln thought the occasion of sufficient moment to summon the Cabinet. There now remain none but General Grant and myself who were present on that interesting occasion, and it can hardly be expected that he will find time in the midst of his sufferings to describe it. Perchance he may have described the scene in his writings, and it is quite probable that Messrs. Hay and Nicolay, who are preparing a biography of Mr. Lincoln, may have the originals.











